

FLIPPED

"THE FLIPSIDE OF NOTHING" MATTHEW 7:13-29

This Week's Core Competency

Authority of the Bible – I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

Jesus makes it clear that his words matter. At the end of his Sermon on the Mount he refers directly to "everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice" and everyone who doesn't (Mt 7:24). Then he *contrasts* these two groups of people by calling the first one "wise" and the second one "foolish" because the first are able to withstand the storms of life while the second are not. Wise people, who not only hear but also put into practice what Jesus had to say, live securely. Foolish people, who don't, invite disaster. Their lives crumble in the midst of life's storms because they are built on feeble foundations.

No wonder Jesus warns against false teachers. "Watch out for false prophets," he says. "They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves." The contrast between how they look and what they are could not be starker. They look like harmless fellow sheep, but in fact,

The gate leading to the easy way is wide, for it is a simple matter to get on to the easy road. There is evidently no limit to the luggage we can take with us.

- John R. W. Stott

they are vicious wolves, ready to kill you with their words if you give them a chance. The imagery perhaps meant more to Jesus' hearers than it does to us today. The only wolves we see are on TV or in the movies. One commentator writes, "Now in first-century Palestine the wolf was the natural enemy of sheep, which were entirely defenseless against it. Hence a good shepherd, as Jesus was to teach later, was always on the look-out for wolves in order to protect his sheep, whereas the hired labourer (who, not being the sheep-owner, did not care about them) would abandon them at the sight of a wolf and run away, leaving it to attack and scatter the flock. Just so Christ's flock is at the mercy of either good shepherds or paid labourers or wolves. The good pastor feeds the flock with truth, the false teacher like a wolf divides it by error, while the time-serving professional does nothing to protect it but abandons it to false teachers. 'I know', said Paul to the Ephesian elders, 'that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert . . .'" (John R. W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, TBST, 198, 99). Fortunately, false prophets are easily recognized not by how they look but by what they say. Make no mistake, any erudite teacher or smooth talking preacher who contradicts what Jesus had to say about the two gates, the two roads, the two destinies, and the two crowds is a wolf. Wolves are adept at blurring the boundaries of the gospel, and they do, so beware.

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When Jesus finished his sermon, people were amazed. They were used to hearing their rabbis "quote sources" to lend authority to their words, but not Jesus. He "taught as one who had authority." This connection between the authority of Jesus and the authority of his words appears again at the end of Matthew's Gospel. When Jesus commissioned his disciples in 28:18-20, he said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" in verse 18. His use of the *divine passive* suggests the meaning, "God has given me all authority in heaven and on earth." That authority extends to his words because in verse 20 he said "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Jesus has the right to command our belief and action because God has given him authority. His words are God words. This week's Core Competency pertains to the authority of the Bible, an authority it has because it is God's word. Jesus' words possess the same authority.

For Discussion

The kingdom of heaven doesn't appeal much to Bill. He trusted Jesus because he didn't want to spend eternity in hell, not because he wanted to spend eternity in heaven. He would never say this to anyone, but as far as he's concerned, heaven is a rather spooky place. It's a place with no substance, no dimensions, a place where disembodied souls live. It's a place he can't see, touch, taste, or smell and so is everything in it. If Jesus weren't there, who would want to go there? What's more, it's a place where he's going to spend eternity—but doing what? He'll have no house, no car, and no job, nothing to do but sing praises to God. He's not opposed to that. God deserves his praise, but after a few million years surely that will get old. Besides that, there'll be no sports, no theaters, no restaurants, no national parks, and no television. All the things that occupy his time and make his life on earth enjoyable now don't exist in heaven. Bill really doesn't want to go to heaven, but it's obviously better than the only other option. What would you tell Bill?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Matthew 7:13-29

13"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

15"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

21"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your

name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

24"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

28When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law. (NIV(c)1984)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Highlight v. 13a.
- * Circle the figurative words "gate" and "road" in v. 13.
- * Box "for" indicating *reason* in v. 13.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 14, 15, 17, 21, 26 and "yet" indicating *contrast* in v. 25.
- * Draw a line from "false prophets" in v. 15 to "not everyone" in v. 21.
- * Circle "fruit" in vv. 16-20.
- * Draw a line from "says to me" in v. 21 to "say to me" in v. 22.

- * Underline "kingdom of heaven" in v. 21.
- * Bracket "who does the will of my Father" in v. 21
- * Circle "that day" in v. 22.
- * Highlight v. 23.

- * Box "therefore" indicating *result* in v. 24.
- * Box "like" indicating *comparison* in vv. 24, 26.
- * Underline "these words of mine" in vv. 24, 26.
- * Circle "authority" in v. 29.

day **2** **EXPLORE** – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Jesus described two different "gates" and two different "roads." To what do these figurative terms refer?
2. Explain *why* he said, "Enter through the narrow gate."
3. Jesus warned, "Watch out for false prophets." *Why* "watch out" for them?
4. What do you infer about them from verse 19?
5. Give examples of them from Jesus' day and ours—without naming names.
6. Jesus talked about entering the "kingdom of heaven." Do you think he was talking about going to heaven? Explain.
7. What "day" is Jesus referring to in verse 22? (Cf. 12:36, 37; 25:31-46)
8. Jesus said, "Only he who *does the will of my Father* who is in heaven" enters the kingdom of heaven. Who could that be if not those who prophesy, exorcise demons, and perform miracles?
9. What's the point of the analogy in verses 24-27?
10. **Discussion:** This passage is about who can enter the kingdom and who cannot. In a nutshell, who's in and who's out?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Matthew 7:13-29 forms the conclusion of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, which began in 5:1. In it he adds no new commandments, but as one might expect, he invites his hearers to "enter through the narrow gate" of faith in him and his word instead. His conclusion has three parts. First (vv. 13, 14; cf., two gates, two ways, two destinations, two crowds), he invites his hearers to "enter through the narrow gate" because the small gate and the narrow road lead to life while the wide gate and the broad road lead to destruction. His figurative words indicate there are two ways in life, the inclusive way of the majority and the exclusive way of the few—the easy way and the hard way. The inclusive way is the way of conventional religious wisdom, whatever that religion might be. "The broad gate and road is inviting, offering plenty of room for those who would follow the cultural and pious norm of the religious leaders" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 321). The exclusive way is the way of faith in Jesus and his word. The inclusive way is the way that makes sense to most people but ends in destruction. The exclusive way is the way that makes sense to just a few but ends in eternal life. "The narrow gate and road is much more restrictive, because it is limited to Jesus and his manner of discipleship. His is the minority way insofar as few will dare abandon the popular opinion of the people and the religious establishment" (321). "What is immediately striking about these verses is the absolute nature of the choice before us. We would all prefer to be given many more choices than only one, or better still to fuse them all into a conglomerate religion, thus eliminating the need for any choice. But Jesus cuts across our easy-going syncretism. He will not allow us the comfortable solutions we propose. Instead he insists that ultimately there is only one choice, because there are only two possibilities to choose from" (Stott, 193).

Second (vv. 15-23), he warns his hearers to "watch out for false prophets." "Jesus obviously assumed that there were such. There is no sense in putting on your garden gate the notice 'Beware of the dog' if all you have at home is a couple of cats and a budgerigar!" (197; cf., Mt 15:14; 24:11, 24; 2Pe 2:1-3, 17-22). And if there are "false" prophets, presumably there must be some benchmark of

truth, some standard that can be used to distinguish what is true from what isn't. In this context that benchmark is what Jesus had to say. He speaks with authority; his words are God's words (cf., Mt 28:18, 20). This part of Jesus' conclusion raises a number of interpretive questions, but the gist of what he had to say is plain enough. False prophets are those who claim to speak on God's behalf but don't. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law fit the bill in Jesus' day, and there are plenty of their ilk around today. Anyone who contradicts Jesus by preaching a "wide gate, broad way" kind of gospel is a false prophet. False prophets make finding the narrow gate difficult and are extremely dangerous because they don't look dangerous at all. On the outside they look safe like sheep; if we could only see them on the inside, we'd run for our spiritual lives. And fortunately, Jesus said we can; we can catch a glimpse of what's inside them by carefully examining what they say. About them he said, "You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the *mouth speaks*" (12:34 italics added). Their words are their fruit, and if their words are bad, they're bad. False prophets not only don't preach what Jesus preached, they don't practice what Jesus preached either. "Within the context of the Sermon on the Mount, the false prophet can only be someone who does not advocate the narrow way presented by Jesus . . . Just as he does not advocate Jesus' narrow way, so also does he fail to live it; this fact must one day be exposed to all who cherish the narrow-way . . . The falseness of their teaching erupts in the disobedience of their lives" (D. A. Carson, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 175).

On judgment day false prophets will try to get into the kingdom of heaven but they won't make it. Even though they'll plead their case based on their good works, they won't make it. They prophesied, they exorcised demons, they performed miracles all in Messiah's name, but they didn't know the king. They failed to do the one work the Father required of them. They failed to believe in the one he sent.

Third (vv. 24-27), he tells a story of wise and foolish builders. On the one hand there are those who believe in him and his words; on the other there are those who don't. Those who believe are

like a man who builds his house on a rock. Those who don't are like a man who builds his house on sand. The first man is proven wise because his house lasts. The second man is proven foolish because his house doesn't. By the way, hearing Jesus' words, listening to what he had to say, isn't enough. The contrast is between "everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice" and "everyone who

hears these words of mine and *does not* put them into practice," those who hear and obey and those who hear but don't obey. Doing what Jesus had to say is essential. If you're wise, you'll do both and enter through the narrow gate that leads to a life that lasts. "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching" (v. 28).

The Message of the Passage

Christ's disciples aren't duped by false teachers—instead, they practice what Jesus preached, taking the narrow road that leads to life.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 13 **gate, road** "The image of two paths in life was common in Judaism, whether speaking of separate paths that lead to paradise or to Gehenna [i.e., hell] (b. Ber. 28b), or of a narrow path of life's hardships that ultimately lead to a broad path of eternal blessing (e.g., 2 Esd. 7:3-9) (Wilkins, 321). Jesus' metaphors are quite clear. The wide gate and the broad road each leads to destruction (*apoleia*)—eternal ruin, the result of divine judgment (cf. 2Pe 3:7; Re 17:8). The small gate and the narrow road each leads to life. "The sequence of gate and way is not significant; one does not enter the gate to get upon the way or at the end of the way enter the gate. The two metaphors refer together to the same thing" (Donald A. Hagner, *Word Biblical Commentary*, v. 33a, *Matthew 1-13*, 179). The two words do seem to carry slightly different nuances, however. "We may profitably reflect that both the initial commitment to Christ [gate] and the subsequent journey of faith [road] are important, and that we may see them both indicated here" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 176).
- v. 13 **broad, narrow** The spatial terminology is metaphorical. "Wide' versus 'narrow' may refer not only to the majority versus the minority but also to relative levels of difficulty or ease. 'Narrow' in v. 14 comes from the verb *thilbo*, meaning to experience trouble or difficulty, while 'broad' in v. 13 can have overtones of prosperous" (Craig I. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 1332; cf. Wilkins, 321, 22). "The word [*eurychoros*] means 'broad, spacious, roomy' (AG), and some manuscripts combine these images and call this way 'wide and easy' (Stott, 194).
- v. 14 **life** See Ps 1 where prospering and perishing are the alternatives.
- v. 15 **false prophets** I.e., people who claimed to speak for God but in fact did not. It's difficult to know for sure who Jesus had in mind. "We have no way of knowing whether Jesus had any precise group in mind (and if so which); nor can we know whether Matthew had any particular people in mind in recording the words. But the term is wide enough to cover any who falsely claim to set forth the way of God" (Morris, 176). Nevertheless, the religious leaders of Jesus' day clearly fit the bill. He denounced them, i.e., the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, earlier in his sermon in 5:20, as well as hypocrites who made a show of following their religious traditions (6:1-18). Later he turned his "fruit bearing" language against them in 12:33-37.
- vv. 16, 20 **fruit** While most interpret "their fruit" to mean "their conduct," better to look at what comes out of them to recognize them. And what they say is what comes out of them (12:33-37). "We should probably understand their teaching also as part of their fruits, for their teaching proceeds from what they are and it is by our words that we will be condemned or justified on Judgment Day (12:37)" (177). After quoting Matthew 12:33-35, another author writes, "Clearly both passages employ identical imagery, and Matthew 12 makes explicit a meaning which is required also in Matthew 7. A false prophet must be tested by his message. If he is inwardly corrupt and ravenous this will stand revealed by the character and quality of his communications. Men ought not to be deceived by his gentility, urbanity, or sophistication. They must reject such sheep's clothing when the spoken words expose the growl of a wolf!" (Zane C. Hodges, *Grace in Eclipse*, 15). Ironically, Jesus' religious opponents, Judaism's false prophets, were what they accused him of being—evil (12:24-28).
- v. 21 **kingdom of heaven** Not the present heaven where Christians now go when they die, and not the new heavens and new earth where Christians will live eternally. The kingdom of heaven refers to the earthly rule of Christ, the son of David, over Israel and the Gentiles.
- v. 21 **does the will** "This is an arresting text, but it does not say what some have made it say. To begin with, it does not affirm salvation by works! Ironically, it is works that the false professors lay claim to. They have engaged in prophecy, exorcism, and miracle-working in Jesus' name and yet are denied access to God's kingdom. "It must be remembered, moreover, that this is a scene set in a future day of judgment. These are not, therefore, conscious charlatans trying to deceive their Judge with bogus claims to miraculous activity! On the contrary, they are all too desperately sincere. Nor are their claims denied. "What is denied, however, is that they have a valid connection with their Judge, or He with them. 'I never knew you' are His stinging words. [cf. Jn 10:14; 17:3] "They had not done 'the will of My Father in heaven.' But what was that? What did God want them to do in order to gain entrance to His Kingdom? Only one thing! (The gate is narrow!) He wanted them to trust His Son for eternal life. They had not done so. Whatever else they had done was irrelevant to their claims. And worse, it was 'lawlessness' since it was done outside of a living relationship with Christ" (16). Obedience to the will of the Father here does not refer to obeying the OT law as God's will but to believing in the one he has sent (Jn 6:23).
- v. 22 **that day** Jesus is referring to the day he returns to earth to judge the nations. On that day he will separate the sheep from the goats, the righteous from the unrighteous. The righteous will then receive their inheritance, the kingdom, and the unrighteous will then receive their sentence, eternal punishment (cf. Mt 25:31-46).

Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.
Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

If you are looking for a way to reinforce the core competency this week with your kids, there is a great opportunity in our community! Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has the Dead Sea Scrolls on display through December. We believe in the Authority of the Bible. It is God's book that tells us what to believe and do. The Dead Sea Scrolls are fragments of over 300 biblical texts dating back as far as 2, 250 years ago. They include the earliest known biblical texts. The scrolls were discovered by Bedouin shepherds in a cave near the Dead Sea in 1947. Since then they have been carefully restored and protected and have traveled to museums around the world. Southwestern Seminary has created a beautiful exhibit with interactive activities for kids. You can find out more information on how to go see these treasures by visiting www.seethescrolls.com.

As I think about the care and attention these scrolls have received it makes me wonder how I treat God's Word in my home. Is it prominently displayed and referred to often? Is it thrown in a drawer that is never opened or still in the trunk of my car from last Sunday? Do my kids see me spending time in it and treating it with care? Make it a point this week to bring honor to God by honoring His Word.

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Matthew 7:7-12

1. Jesus compares three different things in our text today. What are they?
2. According to verse 20, how will we be recognized?
3. What happened to the house that was built on sand?

What Do You Think

1. What are some ways we bear good fruit?
2. What are some ways we bear bad fruit?
3. What does it mean to build your house on a strong foundation?

What R U Going To Do

Place your Bible on the dinner table one night. When someone notices it, use it as a discussion starter on the importance of the Bible in our lives. Talk about why it is important for us to know and follow God's Truth.

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Authority of the Bible- I believe the Bible is God's book that tells me what to believe and do.

Memory Verse

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

Tom Bulick (M.A. in Educational Leadership, Eastern Michigan University, Th.M. in Old Testament, and Ph.D. in Bible Exposition, Dallas Theological Seminary). For more than thirty-five years, Tom has served as pastor, faculty member, and administrator. Tom was Vice President for Student Life and Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity Western University (Vancouver, B.C.) for twelve years before accepting the position of Spiritual Formation Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. He and his wife Ruth have been married forty-four years and have one son, Zach.

Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.